BALM in *GILEAD*:

Or, a SPUR to

REPENTANCE.

As it was lately delivered in a

SERMON.

By *James Strong* M. A. and Miniſter of the Goſpel.

BIR

Si remorſum conſcientiâ propter peccatum ſentio, ſirpentem illum eneum, Chriſtum in cruce aſpicio; ibi peccatum aliud invenio, contra meum peccatum, quod me accuſat & devorat. Peccatum vero aliud, ſcillicet in carne Chriſti qui tollit peccatum mundi omnipotens eſt, damnat & devorat peccatum meum. Luth. Tom. 4. fol. 54. *a.*

Idem. *Omnia alia peccata que agnoſcimus & non defendimus condonantur, peccatum autem quod defenditur eſt irremiſſibile.* Luth. Tom. 4. fol. 294. *b.*

All ſin and blaſphemy ſhall be forgiven unto men, &c. Mat. 12. 31.

LONDON,

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Dom. Edvardo Ceely *ſeniori Armigero, Religionis & petatis fautori Eximio, in teſtimonium ſumme ſuæ obſervantiæ, Chartas has ſummiſſime dicat & dedicat.*

I. S.

2370:07

To the experienced Chriſtian unto whoſe hands the enſuing Diſcourſe ſhall come; eſpecially the Hearers and Favourers of it in and about *Taunton*, to whom it was preached; Grace, Mercy and Peace, &c.

THere's none that is but initiated in Chriſtianity, but will readily confeſs ſin to be his deadly enemy; and is convinced, that if ever he fall, it will be under this enemies hand. Were we but ſafe from this enemy, how eaſie were it to bid a defiance to the reſt; Death, Hell, and the Grave? What Requiems ſhould we ſing to our Souls! what heavenly Jubilees *ſhould we keep in our hearts! But Oh! the conſcience of guilt damps all our joys, and makes our hearts, like* Nabals, *die within us, while we*

are alive. Now it hath ever been deemed good policy to know what the ſtrength of an enemy is: And though it be true, that there's no ſin ſo ſmall, but of it ſelf its damnable; yet withal theres none ſo great, but by repentance is pardonable.

Peccaſſe non damnat, ſed non pœnitere, *Luth. Tom.* 4. fol. 294. *b.*

And this is the ſubject of this following Diſcourſe. 'Tis a remarkable paſſage that Luther *hath in a diſcourſe of this nature: He reports of one* Martinus, *when the Devil reproached him of his facility in abſolving men of their ſins, even ſuch as were moſt wicked; yea, ſaid he, and I would abſolve thee to, couldeſt thou but ſay, I do repent me of my ſin. Oh that Repentance, which is that only door of hope that is opened to Sinners in the death of Chriſt, we ſhould either ſhut it our ſelves, or ſuffer* Satan *to ſhut it againſt us! And yet what a root of* Novatiaſme *doth there naturally grow in the hearts of the Sons of* Adam! *How apt are we to have hard thoughts of God, and heavy thoughts of our ſelves? eſpecially if*

if Conſcience charge upon us the guilt of any ſcarlet ſin, we preſently conclude our caſe deſparate, and our wound paſt remedy. Reader, art thou ſuch a ſinner? thou wilt find thy ſelf deeply concerned in this ſhort Diſcourſe. Take heed thou faint not under thy fears, leſt thy laſt error be worſe than the firſt. Read and Conſider: Here's good news for great Sinners. Learn this great duty of Repentance, and thou mayeſt cut off Goliah's *head with his own ſword, and foil* Satan *even in his own wiles, by making that ſin an argument to repent, which thy Adverſary deſigned of purpoſe for thy ruin. Here's a Myſtery worth the ſtudying,* (i.e.) *the reality of the Chriſtians Charter, that all things* (*even ſin it ſelf*) *ſhall work together for good to them that love God.*

Many have bleſſed God for their croſſes; and one I have read, who had a reach higher: 'Tis an high expreſſion of Holy Mr. Rutherford. Though I do not properly bleſs God for my ſins; yet ſo far I do, as they are an occaſion

of

of magnifying Gods mercy in their pardon. *Sure 'tis a double torment to* Satan, *when he is out-ſhot in his own bow, worſted at his own Weapon; and God turns his wiles* (*like* Achitophel's) *into fooliſhneſs. What ever thou be that art a great ſinner, know thou art ſuch a one whom God hath deſigned to be an occaſion of diſcovering the unſearchable riches of his mercy. Now perhaps thou magnifieſt thy own ſin; make it thy work at laſt, to magnifie the mercy of God, and thou art ſafe. Come, do not any longer diſpute againſt thy right to that pardon that is ſealed and ſent to thee in the blood of Jeſus. Be no longer faithleſs, but believe. As incrudelity ſtrengthens* Satans *arm, ſo it doth in ſome ſenſe weaken Gods; and gives him cauſe to complain of us as of* Nazareth, *he can do no great things for us, becauſe of our unbelief. What ever be thy diſeaſe, try that Soveraign remedy,* Iſa. 55. 3, *and thou canſt not miſcarry. And now, that God who alone can perſwade* Japhet, *&c. perſwade every Soul into whoſe hand*

hand this diſcourſe ſhall come, when they know their Maſters will, to do it; which is, and ſhall be the prayer of him who hath no higher Ambition than in his place to be an inſtrument to ſerve the Lord Jeſus and his people.

I. S.

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For thy names ſake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity; for it is great.

TWas Mans happineſs by nature, that in his firſt creation he was made without ſin; but in his new creation, his happineſs conſiſteth in the forgivenſs of ſin: Let the *Pſalmiſt* witneſs himſelf, *Pſal.* 32. 1, *Bleſſed is the man whoſe wickedneſs is forgiven*, &c. For this bleſſedneſs the *Pſalmiſt* begs and prays as heartily as ever a poor Beggar did for an Alms, again and again in this *Pſalm.* Outward dangers, with inward and ſpiritual diſtreſſes, like a complicated diſeaſe,

ſeaſe, had now enwrapt poor *David* on every ſide. Look on him without, his enemies purſue him; within, there the ſenſe of his ſins oppreſſeth him; eſpecially the ſins of his Youth, *v.* 5, *Remember not the ſins of my youth*, &c. Well, againſt both theſe evils he uſeth one common remedy (*viz.*) Prayer; but we find him bending the ſtrength of his Soul againſt the latter of theſe evils (*viz.*) The evil of ſin, which is the ſting that invenoms all other evils. No leſs then three ſeveral times is he at it in this *Pſalm.*

1. Ver. 7. *Remember not the ſins of my youth, nor my rebellions: but according to thy kindneſs remember thou me, even for thy goodneſs ſake, O Lord.* The wanton wickedneſs of his youth, is now remembred with new remorſe; and good reaſon, for the ſins of youth are oft-times puniſht in old Age, *Job* 13.26, *Thou writeſt bitter things againſt me, and makeſt me poſſeſs the iniquities of my youth.*

2. After a while he had by Prayer and Meditation ſtrengthned his Faith

in

in God, he falls to prayer again in this 11. *v.* See then, that conſcience of ſin doth not do all its work at one ſtorm; no, the guilty ſinner muſt look for more aſſaults than one, and in every new aſſault, prayer muſt be a new refuge; *for thy names ſake, O Lord pardon my iniquity*, &c.

3. And yet he hath not done, but puts off the temptation a third time with the ſame expedient, *v.* 18, *Look upon my affliction and my pain, and forgive all my ſins.* And thus you ſee how this tried Saint anſwers every new challenge from ſin, Satan, and his own accuſing Conſcience, with prayer. Prayer is the laſt piece of ſpiritual Armour which that great Apoſtle preſcribes the combating Chriſtian, *Epheſ.* 6. 18, *Praying always*, &c. And one gives this reaſon, becauſe 'tis not only a part of the Armour, but it inables us to uſe all the reſt; and is not only a charm againſt that crooked Serpent to inchant him, but a whip to torment him, and put him to another Hell. By this we fetch Chriſt into the battel,

battel, obtain freſh *ſupplies of the ſpirit*, Phil. 1. 19. and in the iſſue, it makes us more than Conquerors.

Well, 'tis the *Pſalmiſt*'s ſecond conflict that lyes before us as the intended Subject of our diſcourſe.

For thy names ſake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great. In the words we have a Petition for pardon: And this contains two parts; 1. We have a Petition preferred, and here again we have ſeveral things conſiderable.

1. The Perſon Petitioning, [*David*].

2. The Perſon Petitioned, [The Lord]

3. The Petition it ſelf, or the thing for which he Petitions, [Pardon]

The ſecond General contains a twofold argument, by which he urgeth God to pardon him.

1. The firſt is taken from the end or final cauſe of this pardon, 'tis that which will tend to the glory of Gods name (Therefore) *for thy names ſake pardon my iniquity*, &c.

2. The ſecond argument whereby he urgeth

urgeth God to pardon, is taken from the nature of his ſin (and that is a ſtrange one) *for it is great.*

I ſhall give you the ſum of the whole verſe in theſe Concluſions, moſt of which I ſhall but litttle more than name, having deſigned the laſt clauſe of the verſe for the Subject of my diſcourſe.

Doct. 1. That God alone ought to be the object of our Prayers. The Lord Jeſus Chriſt when he taught his Diſciples how to pray, taught them alſo to whom to pray, in the firſt words of that pattern of Prayer, (*Our Father*) Mat. 6. and indeed, that Spirit of Adoption which God beſtows on all thoſe who are regenerate, doth by vertue of their new nature, direct all his children to himſelf, and make them *cry*, *Abba Father*, Rom. 8. 15.

Reaſ. 1. God commands it, *Call upon me in the day of trouble*, Pſal 50. 15. As prayer is a duty in the Creature, ſo 'tis the Dignity or Glory of the Creatour; one of the higheſt Services that we owe him; him, *and him only*

only muſt we ſerve, Mat. 4. 10.

2. God accepts it; the Sons of *Jacob* ſhall not ſeek him in vain. 'Tis a title wherein the great God glories; he calls himſelf a God *that heareth prayers, and therefore to him all fleſh muſt come*, Pſal. 65. 2.

3. Every ſin is a wrong done to God; though the treſpaſs may be againſt man, yet the tranſgreſſion is againſt him. Though *David* had murther'd *Uriah*, and defiled his wife, yet he cryes out, *Againſt thee only have I ſinned*, &c. *Pſal.* 51. 4. Every ſin is a violation of his Law, who is the only *Lawgiver*, *Jam.* 4. 12. Though then *David* knew he was not innocent either to *Bathſheba* or *Uriah*, yet the ſin was mainly againſt God, in that he had hereby given his enemies occaſion to blaſpheme him, 2 *Sam.* 12. 14.

4. 'Tis Gods property to pardon ſin, and therefore to him alone we are to pray, *Iſa.* 43. 25, *I even I am he that putteth away thine iniquities for my own ſake, and will not remember thy ſins.* This God challenges as his

his peculiar right, *Dan.* 9. 9. *Compaſſion and forgiveneſs is in the Lord our God, albeit we have rebelled againſt him: To thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy,* &c. *Pſal.* 62. 11.

Uſe. Oh then let us all ſet up this trade of prayer, and ſay as *Peter*, To whom elſe ſhould we go, but only unto God? But remember, that we pray to God in Chriſt; for there's no coming to the Father but by the Son, *Joh.* 14. 6. and for our incouragement, we are aſſured, whatever we ask of God in his name, he will deny us nothing. 'Tis but to *open our mouths wide, and God will fill them*, Pſ. 81. 10. 'Tis ſtoried of Reverend Doctor *Preſton*, that being on a time in company with ſome godly men, one of them asked what was the beſt trade? Whereunto he anſwered, Beggars was both the hardeſt and the richeſt trade. He meant Prayer the hardeſt to be well managed, and yet the richeſt, when 'tis well followed. Oh what rich returns doth this duty bring home, like a merchants Ship coming from a far Country!

try! It may pass for a maxim in Religion, He that can pray, can never be poor. Note we next,

Doct. 2. That 'tis the nature of saving Faith in spiritual distresses, to take hold of every advantage that God gives us. And this we have from the title which the *Psalmist* gives to God, he prays to the Lord (*Jehovah*) Now we must know, that Gods titles are no empty ornaments. In *Exod.* 6. 3, when God renewed his promise of delivering the *Israelites*, he says thus to *Moses*: *I appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, by the name of El Shaddai, God Almighty; but by my name Jehovah, I was not known to them.* An instance we have in *Gen.* 17. 1, *When God appeared to Abraham, he says thus: I am El Shaddai, God-All-sufficient, or God Almighty.* By this title God was pleased especially to make known his Power; but by the other his Mercy: by the one God made himself known as Creatour; by the other as a Redeemer: by the one he appeared in himself; by the other in his Son, *God*

was

was in Chriſt, 2 Cor. 5. 19. *Quantum illis ſufficiebat tantum indulſit, non indulſit quod orat ſummum.* God gave them enough, but not the main. In ſhort; that name whereby God made known himſelf to the Patriarchs, did diſcover a part of his nature; but his name *Jehovah* implies all his infinite Perfections: as,

Vide Cameror. de Eccleſia, p. 232.

1. It implies Gods being in himſelf, before the World was,

2. His giving being to his creatures.

3. His faithfulneſs in performing his promiſes, by full and anſwerable effects; and above all, the promiſe of the *Meſſiah*. Well, God hath given *David* a fair advantage to take hold of him, which advantage lies in his very name (*Jehovah*): and *David* by faith faſtens on this lock, *The name of the Lord is a ſtrong Tower; to this the righteous flie, and are ſaved.* Prov. 18. 10. And again, *In the Lord Jehovah is everlaſting ſtrength, and therefore he truſts in him for ever*, Iſa. 26. 4.

Vſe. 1. It blames ſuch Chriſtians, who under ſpiritual diſtreſs, ſlight the Conſolations which God offers them, and the means whereby they are conveighed: Oh how ingenious are diſtreſſed Conſciences to wrangle with God, by framing objections againſt their own comforts; when we ought rather to wreſtle with him, to put the promiſes in ſuit! And this is the caſe ſometimes even of good men, even that very *David* himſelf, that now was ready to catch at any thing that might eaſe his burdened Soul; yet at another time acknowledged that his *ſoul refuſed comfort*, Pſal 77. 2. O 'tis ſad when the comforter comes and knocks at our door, and we refuſe to open; but oftentimes ſend him away grieved, when he would make us glad! This is to flye from our own mercy, while with *Rachel* we refuſe to be comforted. But this is but the diſtemper of believers.

Vſe. 2. Next then, here's an argument of comfort to thouſands of Gods dear Servants, who yet walk in darkneſs

neſs and ſee no light. Lo, this ſmall creviſe lets in light enough to make thee ſee thy own grace, if thou find thy heart ready to ſeize on the promiſe, to embrace Chriſt Jeſus, to catch hold of any offer of mercy that is made in the Goſpel. If thou art as glad of one ſuitable promiſe, as he that findeth great ſpoyls, be ſure fleſh and blood never revealed this to thee. As we know there's life, where there's motion; even ſo by the activity and motion of the believing-Soul toward God and Chriſt, we may diſcover a work of grace, and conclude that God is in us of a truth.

Uſe. 3. Learn we next our duty: he's a believer indeed whoſe Faith proves it ſelf by its Operation: Faith lives upon God, and inclines always toward him, as the Load-ſtone toward the North-pole. O let us be always flocking to Chriſt, even as Eagles to the Carkaſe: ſhall there be ſuch Wells of Salvation opened, and we not draw water of life from them? Shall God throw down ſuch lines of love from

Heaven, to draw poor ſinking Souls out of the Sea of ſin and miſery, and we refuſe to catch hold of them? Or that golden Scepter of peace be held out, and none come and touch it? Ah how often doth God invite us to take hold of his Arm, *Iſa.* 27. 5, *and to take hold of his Covenant*, Iſa. 56.4. O let us claſp him, with *Simeon*, in the Arms of our Faith; and reſolve, as *Jacob*, not to let him go until he bleſs us.

If God had left us no other advantages, yet remember his Name, his name is *Jehovah*; Iſa. 42. 8, *I am the Lord Jehovah; that is my name; and my glory will I not give unto another.* Even by this name of Gods, he ſtands bound to make good all his gracious promiſes to his people; O lets take hold of Gods Arm, and of his ſtrength: prayer is nothing but a ſpiritual wreſtling with God; and we ſhould know, though God ſeem to put us off, yet he is willing to yield to us. Gods name is but his nature; let us plead it to the utmoſt; tell him that he is the *Lord, ſtrong, merciful, and gracious, pardoning*

pardoning iniquities, &c. *Exod.* 34. 6.

Doct. 3. That the pardoning of ſin tends exceedingly to the Glory of Gods name. In this the Mercy and Goodneſs of God ſhine forth to the utmoſt; and he convinceth the world, that he doth not delight in the Ruin, Death, and Slaughters of his people, but rather in their proſperity. If any queſtion this truth, I would refer him to that pregnant Scripture, *Exod.* 33. 18, 19. When *Moſes* that eminent Servant of the Lord, made that Prayer to him, That he would ſhew him his Glory: He received a grant of his Prayer in theſe words: *I will make my goodneſs to paſs before thee:* but what's that? Why my name ſhall be told thee, by which I glory to be known; and then in the next Chapter, when the Divine glory paſſed by, this Proclamation was made, *v.* 5, 6, *The Lord, the Lord, ſtrong, merciful, and gracious, long-ſuffering, and abundant in goodneſs and truth.* And 'tis added, *v.* 7, *Reſerving mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion, and*

ſin. *Theſe are the things wherein God delighteth*, Jer. 9. 24. Theſe we may call the back-parts of God, ſo much of him as may be known to his creatures; and thus to know him, is life eternal.

Reaſ. 1. 'Tis an argument of infinite goodneſs; we have heard God makes his goodneſs now the matter of his Glory. 'Twas the Honour of *Cæſar* that he never forgot any thing but injuries: 'tis infinitely more for the Honour of God, that he forgiveth, and forgetteth nothing but the ſins of his people.

Reaſ. 2. As God by pardoning ſin, glorifies himſelf; ſo he procures Glory from his pardoned people. 'Tis the proper effect of mercy to bring in a return of Glory: read *Iſa.* the 55 and 7. *v.* When the Lord promiſeth pardon of ſin to the penitent, *Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous his own imaginations; and return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he is ready to forgive*; and then 'tis added,

added, *v.* 13, *This ſhall be to the Lord for a name.* This name, Gods people do moſt joyfully give him, in *Micha*, 7. 18, *Who is a God like unto thee?* &c.

Reaſ. 3. That's the laſt reaſon. This act of mercy (*viz.*) Pardoning ſin, exalts God above all Idols in the world; that muſt needs be a glorious Act which none in the world can do but God.

Tu multuantur quidem Gentes circa Divos ſuos, & nova quotidie ſacra faciunt, nunquam tamen conſcientiæ terroribus liberantur. Thus *Gualter* excellently on that laſt cited Sripture. The heathens make much ado about their Idol-gods, and offer new ſacrifices to them daily; but alas! all thoſe bloody offerings never bring the leaſt eaſe to their guilty Conſciences. This is Gods Perogative-Royal, he is a Sin-forgiving God; and in this there is none like him: Their Rock is not as our Rock, themſelves being Judges.

Uſe 1. Hence, firſt, we ſee how unlike they are to God, who inſtead of

pardoning the wrongs done them by others, do mind and meditate nothing but revenge; and although vengeance be one of Gods Prerogatives, yet hereby dare they uſurp upon God, and do wrong to him, that they may revenge their own dreadful caſe, when men live as if the Scripture were no better than waſte Paper: Let me ask the *Lamech*'s of the world, whether they never read *Mat.* 5. 44, 45, *Love your enemies, bleſs them that curſe you*, &c. *that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven?* Oh remember, that as 'tis the glory of God, ſo 'tis the *glory of a man too, to paſs by a tranſgreſſion*, Prov. 19. 11. *Ælian* reports of *Auguſtus*, that he did but laugh at the Satyr and Buffoonries which they had publiſhed againſt him. And *Socrates*, when followed home to his Houſe by one that railed at him all day, offered the railer a Lanthorn to light him home, that he might not ſtumble in the dark. O that Chriſtians ſhould be ſent to School to Heathens! we ſhall never prove our ſelves

Children

Children of God, unleſs we reſemble our Father; *God, to make known his Power and Patience, endureth with much long-ſuffering, the veſſels of wrath fitted for deſtruction*, Rom. 9. 22. What relation have they then to God, that muſt have an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth?

Uſe 2. Here then we ſhould even loſe our ſelves, while we admire the bottomleſs depths of Gods unſpeakable mercies; When infinite Majeſty is wronged by his own creatures, and hath another way to right himſelf on vile duſt and aſhes, (*viz.*) by purſuing and puniſhing us according to Rules of Juſtice; yet he chuſeth rather to glorifie his Mercy in pardoning the ſins of his people, than his Juſtice in deſtroying their Souls. Let us willingly give God the glory of his own title, who chuſeth to be called *the father of mercies*, 2 Cor 1. 3.

Uſe. 3. And to this purpoſe, let us in the next place comply with God, and give God the glory of that ſweet attribute wherein he ſo delighteth.

What

What do we mean, that by nature are but maſſes of ſin and of corruption, that we do not ſue out that pardon which God is ſo ready to give us? 'Tis true, the promiſe is free, yet God expects we ſhould be his *remembrancers*, Iſa. 43. 26, and will *be enquired after by the houſe of Iſrael*, Ezek. 36. 37, for all thoſe good things which he hath promiſed in his Covenant of Grace: 'Tis but to open the wound, and he will pour in the oyle of grace. Oh who would live in debt, and be ſubject every hour to an arreſt by that dreadful Serjeant Death, when we have ſo merciful a Creditor, who upon our requeſt is ready to forgive us all! Note next, that,

Doct. 4. Confeſſion of ſin is a neceſſary condition to the remiſſion of ſin. The *Pſalmiſt* freely confeſſes his guilt; he acknowledgeth his iniquity with its agravations, and God freely pardons him. And theſe are the terms on which the promiſe is ſtill of force to us, 1 *Joh.* 1. 9, *If we confeſs our ſins, God is faithful and juſt to forgive us*, &c.

Reaſ. 1.

Reaſ. 1. Confeſſion of ſin honours the Juſtice of God. When ever a ſenſible ſinner makes a ſerious confeſſion of his ſins to God, he doth but condemn himſelf and juſtifie God, though God ſhould for ever deſtroy him: read *Pſal.* 51. 4, *Againſt thee only have I ſinned, and done evil in thy ſight; that thou mighteſt be juſtified in thy ſaying, and clear when thou judgeſt:* And thus the unrighteouſneſs of man doth but *commend the righteouſneſs of God*, Rom. 3. 4, 5. The humble penitent doth freely acquit and juſtifie God in whatſoever he threatens or inflicts.

Reaſ. 2. Confeſſion magnifies the Mercy of God. Why doth the Apoſtle ſo ſtudiouſly ſet forth the ſinfulneſs of all, in *Rom.* 2. 3, but that thereby he may afterward advance and magnifie the mercy of God in the Salvation of many? For ſith all have ſinned; it muſt needs follow, that if God left all to periſh, he were moſt juſt, and if he ſave any, it's the fruit of his mercy.

Reaſ. 3.

Reaſ. 3. Again, from our ſelves we have theſe Reaſons. 1. Hearty confeſſion exceedingly humbles; 'Tis the hardeſt matter in the world to get a man to keep an Aſſize on his own heart; to arraign, charge, accuſe, and paſs ſentence on a mans ſelf: No, though we are ſevere in judging others; yet in our own caſe, we are partial: But ſerious confeſſion makes way for all this; and when once God hath humbled us, he knows what to do with us, *Exod.* 33. 5, The ſick man (we ſee) is unruly till the Phyſician tells him plainly he is but a dead man; before, he cannot take this Potion, 'tis not pleaſant; nor ſwallow that pill, it is not toothſome; but when once he ſees he muſt purge or dye, then he ſubmits and begs the Phyſician to bleed him, purge him, any thing, ſo that he ſave his life. 'Tis juſt ſo between God and Sinners: They complain this remedy istoo hard, and that's too bitter: But when once by confeſſion God hath humbled us, when we find by experience that ſin

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is an evil thing and a bitter; then the poor ſinner is at a plain point with God; then, do with me Lord as pleaſeth thee, only ſave my Soul. Read *Lev.* 26. 41, 42, . *If their uncircumciſed heart ſhall be humbled, and they ſhall willingly bear the puniſhment of their iniquity; then I will remember my covenant made with Abraham*, &c.

Reaſ. 4. 'Tis the way to put the Soul to a holy penance: Whilſt by a ſinful ſilence we bite in our own grief, the ſinner hath a ſhift to ſhun that contrition and confeſſion that becomes a penitent; but when once the poor ſinner comes to confeſſion, then every other ſin, and every other circumſtance of ſin, lays on another laſh. Thus ſin comes to have its true weight, and ſo preſſeth the Soul, till at laſt the ſinner cry out, that 'tis a burden too heavy for him to bear.

Reaſ. 5. Serious confeſſion is one good means to prevent backſliding: as a man ſick of a ſurfeit, the more pains he hath been at in Vomiting up an offenſive morſel, the more he is for-

tified

tified againſt ſwallowing that loathſome bit again. No, he is unwilling to buy repentance at ſo deer a rate.

Uſe. 1. Whoever he be then that needs pardon of ſin, is hereby adviſed what courſe to take: why doth thy trembling heart ſtand doubting of ſucceſs? What greater ſecurity can we deſire to imbolden us to ſeek pardon by confeſſing ſin, than the Faithfulneſs and Righteouſneſs of God to forgive? O learn we to defie all ſinful fears: how grim and hideous ſoever thy ſins look, yet this promiſe is ſure, and ſtands like *Mount Sion*, that can never be removed; Though God may ſuſpend the ſenſe of pardon, yet be ſure he cannot deny it.

The *Jeſuits* tell us of a Student in *Paris*, while he was bitterly making confeſſion of his ſins, and writing them in a paper, the paper on a ſudden vaniſhed. Whether the ſtory be true, I ſhall not debate; but to our purpoſe, be ſure, as ſoon as we by confeſſion acknowledg the debt, God croſſeth the

the Book. Yea the Lord is afore-hand with us, in *Pſal.* 32. 5, the *Pſalmiſt* ſaid only, he would confeſs his ſins, *and God forgave the iniquity of ſin.*

Come we next to the laſt argument whereby the *Pſalmiſt* pleads with God for pardon, and that is a ſtrange one, (*i. e.*) the greatneſs of his ſin, (*for it is great*).

Doct. 5. Obſerve then in the laſt place,

That the greatneſs of ſin ſhould be an argument to provoke us to ſeek pardon by Repentance.

Now to prevent a miſtake, I do not ſay, that the greatneſs of ſin is properly an argument why we ſhould be pardoned; but I would thus be underſtood, That the greater is our ſin, the more reaſon we have to repent; And (repentance being ſuppoſed) there is ſomewhat more reaſon to expect pardon.

I do not ſuppoſe it neceſſary here to prove a difference between ſins. That ſtoical opinion, that there is a parity or equality among all ſins, hath

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in all ages been juſtly exploded as an errour, out of the Church. He that liſt may read the Queſtion debated at large in [*Aquin. prima ſecund.* Q. 73. *Art.* 2.

Let it ſatisfie us, That though no ſin in it ſelf can poſſibly be ſmall, that is committed againſt the great God; yet ſome ſins are more ſinful than other; and ſuch was the ſin for which the *Pſalmiſt* here begs pardon, when he calls it *a great ſin. John* 19. 11. This only by the by; I ſhall return to the aſſertion. Let us weigh the caſe, and we ſhall ſee mercy ſo magnified in the pardon of ſin, that we ſhall ſee cauſe ſufficient to magnifie the riches of Gods grace, and ſhame our ſelves that ever we dared to meaſure divine compaſſions by the ſhort line of corrupt reaſon. *Muſculus* on the words thus debates the matter, *Quid hoc facit ad impetrandum remiſſionem*, &c. How ſhould the greatneſs of ſin be an argument to provoke God to pardon? Certainly, with men it would be an argument to hinder pardon, and not to

to procure it; ſhould I tell a man, Sir, I have done you a very great wrong, and therefore I hope you'l pardon me.

Yet hear, and wonder; with God 'tis not ſo: That which reaſon would make an argument to drive us to deſpair, faith improves as a ground of hope. We ſee here an eminent Believer plead for pardon, by an argument taken from the greatneſs of his ſin; which among diſtreſſed Conſciences is the common reaſon why men conclude their caſe deſparate.

Reaſ. 1. As every ſin hath more need of pardon, by how much the greater it is; ſo God hath the more glory by forgiving it. The deeper is the wound, the more mortal is the ſickneſs, and the more need the Patient hath of Curing; and if the Phyſician work a cure, the greater is his Honour. God, that great Phyſician, never gets ſo much glory as by pardoning great ſins. The greatneſs of our ſin doth commend the greatneſs of Divne Mercy. *For where ſin abounds, grace much more a-*

bounds, Rom. 5. 20, 21, that is, where ſin abounds with the ſenſe, ſorrow, and deteſtation of it, there grace much more abounds. As the ſins of wicked men by their greatneſs do commend the Juſtice of God in puniſhing them; ſo the great ſins of Believers do commend the Mercy of God in pardoning them. 'Tis ſtoried of *Alexander*, when he was to attempt any Service that was more difficult and dangerous than ordinary, he was wont to ſay, This is a work fit for *Alexander*. 'Tis a great God that we have to do with, and great things become him: His ways are not as ours, nor his thoughts as ours.

Reaſ. 2. As in pardoning great ſins God advances his glory by a diſcovery of his Mercy; ſo alſo by ingaging the pardoned Sinner to returns of duty. 'Tis ſaid of *Mary Magdalen, ſhe loved much, becauſe much was forgiven her*, Luk. 7. 47. Whoſe heart is ſo enlarged, or whoſe mouth is ſo widened in bleſſing God, as he who hath had larger experience than ordinary of Divine Mercy?

Reaſ. 3.

Reaſ. 3. Another reaſon may be drawn from our own neceſſity. For the greater is our ſin, the more need we have of Mercy and Pardon. Men do not ſend to the Phyſician for every light diſtemper; but if the diſeaſe be ſharp, they are the more inſtant, and cry out, Do ſomething or I die. Even thus the *Pſalmiſt* comes running to God, as a wounded man that is every moment bleeding himſelf to death, *Heal my ſoul, for I have ſinned againſt thee*, Pſal. 41. 4. And elſewhere, *Mine iniquities prevail againſt me*, &c. *Pſal.* 65. 3.

Reaſ. 4. A fourth argument may be drawn from the Merits of Chriſt. Were the Death and Sufferings of Chriſt of force only to deliver us from ſome leſſer ſins, this would darken the glory of Chirſts ſufferings; but his *blood cleanſeth us from all ſin*, 1 John 1. 7. *Nullum proinde eſt peccatum in ſanctis, quod per ſanguinem Chriſti non remittatur*, ſaith *Zanchy*; There is no ſin then in Believers which is not pardoned in Chriſt; and thence infers, that

a Believer can never poſſibly commit the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt. Oh what unworthy thoughts have we all by nature of the ſufferings of the Son of God, which were the price of our redemption! When the Apoſtle would ſhew the excellency of this ranſome, he ſearches the hidden treaſures of the earth, and throws aſide ſilver and gold, as baſe droſſie ſtuff, unworthy to be compared with this, in 1 *Pet.* 1. 18, 19, *Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as ſilver and gold, from your vain converſation; but with the precious blood of Chriſt*, &c. To raiſe our hearts a little to ſome ſuitable conceptions of the worth of this ſacrifice, I would but a little ingage your thoughts in conſidering theſe dreadful and ſtupendious concomitants of the Lord Jeſus ſufferings. When Chriſt was expiring, even Nature it ſelf lay gaſping. The Sun hid his head in a black mantle, as aſhamed to behold thoſe baſe indignities that were done to the Sun of Righteouſneſs. *The earth quaked! The Rocks were rent! The graves*

graves opened! &c. Inſomuch that 'tis reported, That that arch Atheiſt *Porphiry* cried out, *Aut natura diſſoluitur aut Deus naturepatitur*, Either nature it ſelf expireth, or the God of nature ſuffereth. Well, what low thoughts ſoever we have of the Death of Chriſt; yet God will have us know, that the Manhood of Chriſt only ſuffered, yet the Perſon that ſuffered was God and Man. And then the vertue of Chriſts Death is known, when 'tis applied and improved, *Phil.* 3. 10.

Reaſ. 5. A fourth argument may be drawn from the Covenant of Grace. And this is of as large extent as the Death of Chriſt, in whom the Covenant is made. Read *Jer.* 33. 8, *I will cleanſe them from all their iniquity, whereby they have ſinned againſt me: yea I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have ſinned againſt me*, &c. What ſins doth God promiſe to pardon? Some and not all, leſs and not greater? No ſuch thing, the Covenant makes no difference, *Every ſin and blaſphemy ſhall be forgiven unto*

men, Mat. 12. 31. All without exception. groſs enormities, as well as leſſer infirmities: As the Sun ſcatters the thickeſt miſt, as well as the leaſt vapour; even ſo God promiſes to blot the ſins of his people, *though they are as thick as a cloud*, Iſa. 44. 22.

We read in *John* 7. 23, That Chriſt made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath day; Chriſt did not heal him in part: ſuch are all God cures whenever he takes a poor ſinner in hand. There's no diſeaſe can ſtand before him, *Omnipotenti medico nullus morbus eſt inſanabilis.* No diſeaſe is incurable, when we are in the hands of an Omnipotent Phyſician.

Uſe 1. The firſt uſe is of Caution: Corruption is apt to abuſe the ſweeteſt Mercies. We ſhould take heed that we venture not preſumptuouſlly to commit great ſins, becauſe we hear that the greatneſs of ſin ſhould be an argument to make us ſeek for pardon; this is *to turn the grace of God into wantonneſs*, Jude 4.

'Tis ſad, when the goodneſs of God ſhould

ſhould lead us to repent, that corruption ſhould abuſe it as an occaſion to commit ſin. That Scripture may ſerve as a flaming ſword to keep hardened Sinners from this preſumption, *Deut.* 29. 20, *If any one hear the words of this curſe, ſhall bleſs himſelf in heart, and ſay, I ſhall have peace, though I walk according to the ſtubbornneſs of my own heart*, &c. *The Lord will not be merciful unto that man, but the wrath of the Lord and his jealouſie ſhall ſmoke againſt him*, &c. Such bleſſed truths ſhould not be uſed as ſpurs to provoke us to ſin, but as a bridle to curb corruption, and to reſtrain us from ſin.

Uſe 2. In the next place it informs us, That they are out of the way that ſeek to get pardon by leſſening and extenuating their ſin, loth to ſpeak the one half of their guilt, as *Jonathan*, I did but take a little honey. This is not the guiſe of the godly: *David* acknowledges his ſin a great ſin, and thence pleads for mercy. In *Exod.* 32. 31, *Moſes* interceded for the people

after they had made the golden Calf; and he makes report of it to God in the fulleſt aggravation thereof; *This people have ſinned a great ſin, and have made them gods of gold!* He doth not only confeſs that they had ſinned, but that they had ſinned greatly; and again, they did not only do that that was ſinful; but they had ſinned a ſin that's more. And above all this, they had ſinned a great ſin, in making them golden gods. Oh what divine Rhetorick will grace teach a believing Soul, not only in abaſing it ſelf for ſin, but alſo in exalting Divine Mercy!

3. We may learn hence the Admirable Vertue and Efficacy of Faith, that retorts the arguments of reaſon, drawing grounds of hope from thoſe very ſuppoſitions which carnal reaſon would uſe as arguments to deſpair. Take one inſtance for many in the *Canaanitiſh* Woman, *Mat.* 15. 27, when Chriſt ſeemed to put her off by calling her *dog*, yet by Faith ſhe picks an argument of ſpeeding out of her very

very repulſe; *truth Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs*, &c.

Uſe 4. Lift up then your drooping heads, ye doubting and deſpondent Souls, whoſe ſins have out-grown your hopes; and you are ready to conclude fearful things to your ſelves, ſaying, Verily there is no hope. Could we pry into the boſoms of diſtreſſed Chriſtians, 'tis not to be queſtioned but we ſhould find thouſands that are ſtrangers unto peace, from a woful miſtake of Divine mercy. Deal with the one half of the doubting Souls in the world, they'l tell you, that that which diſcourages them to go to God, is the greatneſs of their ſin. But lo here lyes the art of a Chriſtian, to go to God with boldneſs, and tell him, Lord, the greater are my ſins, the greater will thy glory be, when thou haſt pardoned them. This art holy *David* had learnt, who for abundance of ſin, cryes out not for mercy, but for abundance of mercy, *Pſal.* 51. 1. And for your encouragement, let me add but a few Conſiderations.

1. Con-

1. Conſider, that God in the Salvation of Sinners, had a deſign to magnifie the riches of his mercy, and to work it in ſuch a way, that the creature might have no cauſe of glorying in himſelf, *Epheſ.* 2. 7, *That he might ſhew in the ages to come, the exceeding riches of his grace*, &c. Now know, that Gods mercy is not only above all his works, but above ours too: One depth ſwallows up another; if we ſin to our utmoſt, he ſaves to his utmoſt. And where ſin abounds, grace much more abounds. And thus God ſo over-rules even ſin it ſelf, that he keeps it under the reach of his pardoning mercy.

2. God doth not pardon ſin unwillingly; no, 'tis a very pleaſing work to him; though he be ſlow to vengeance, yet he is ready to mercy, *Mic.* 7. 18, *He retaineth not wrath for ever, becauſe mercy pleaſeth him.* Whatſoever thou art, Sinner, be ſure thou wert never ſo delighted to commit ſin, as God delights to pardon it.

3. 'Twas Chriſts intention in making

king himſelf an offering for ſin, to ſave the chief of Sinners; he ſuffered not only for ſmall Sinners, but for the greateſt, 1 *Tim.* 1. 15, *This is a faithful ſaying*, &c. *that Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſinners, of whom I am chief.* Now can we think that Chriſt Jeſus can be defeated of his end? Shall Chriſt dye of purpoſe to ſave the greateſt Sinners, and ſhall he not obtain it? Yea ſure, *he ſhall ſee the fruit of the travel of his ſoul, and he ſhall be ſatisfied*, Iſa. 53. 11.

4. Conſider, This ſuits with the expreſſions whereby God deſcribes his pardoning of ſin; he promiſeth to *blot out our ſins*, Iſa. 43, 25. Now when the pen is going, it will as ſoon croſs a great debt as a ſmall one. Beſides, the more Gods holineſs hates ſin, the more inclined he is to croſs and cancel it, *And to caſt our ſins unto the bottom of the Sea, that covers the greateſt rocks*, &c. *Mic.* 7. 19.

5. Conſider what Sinners have been pardoned. What think you of *Aarons* idolatry? *Lots* inceſt, *Manaſſes* witchcraft

craft and idolatry, *Peters* denying and forſwearing his Maſter, *Pauls* Perſecution and Blaſphemy? But beyond all, what think you of that ſin of *Adam*, whom yet God hath ſet forth as a Monument of his Mercy? who, though he were advanced above all the creatures, and taken into ſo near communion with God, having perfect ability given him to perſiſt in his created holineſs, yet wilfully rebelled againſt his Maker, and in ſome ſenſe, is guilty of all the ſins of his Poſterity; yet all theſe ſaved and pardoned by believing in Chriſt, *who is the ſame yeſterday, and to day, and for ever*, Heb. 11.8.

Oh then keep the eye of your Faith on the promiſes of the Goſpel, in the darkeſt day of adverſity. Hear what God ſays, *Iſa.* 1. 18, *Though your ſins be as ſcarlet, I will make them as ſnow.* Scarlet in the Hebrew ſignifies *twice*, becauſe 'tis twice died; though we are died twice, thrice, or a hundred times in ſin; though we be never ſo deep-grained by our recidinations and back-ſlidings; yet now there is

Balm

Balm in *Gilead*, God pardons not only *ſeven times, but ſeventy times ſeven*, Jer. 8. 22. Mat. 18. 22.

Beware of this gulf of deſpair; 'tis a high point of Atheiſm to diſtruct mercy: one well obſerves, that *Judas* in betraying Chriſt, was an occaſion of his death as man; but in deſpairing of mercy, he did (what in him lay) to take away his life as God: what groſs infidelity was it to think that his blood that procured a pardon for *three thouſand of thoſe murderers*, in Acts 2, could not have ſaved one ſinner more! Oh how eaſie were our cure in our deepeſt ſtraits, could we apply that Soveraign Remedy to our Sin-ſick-ſouls, which that great Phyſician hath provided!

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